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Week 45: Rescue LIFE last week

Sheila Walsh

"Holding On When You are Afraid"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I'm really excited to have a brand-new book out called *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. I wrote it during the beginning of COVID, feeling myself kind of sinking again. So I wanted to share with you one particular chapter today, and that's "Holding on When You're Afraid."

So I have a story about a little dog of mine. I named him Charlie. He was a West Highland White Terrier. I don't know if you know, but Westies are wonderful little dogs. They're originally from Scotland, but they're becoming increasingly popular here in the United States. They are funny, they're loyal, they're courageous. Charlie was eight weeks old when I got him, and I have to tell you, it was love at first sight.

Westies can live for 16 years, but when Charlie was only two years old, I almost lost him. We'd been playing with a ball in our neighborhood park when I threw it too far, and it rolled onto the road. Well, Charlie ran after it at lightning speed. I called his name as loud as I could as I tore after him. I got to the road just in time to see his ball roll into a storm drain. And as Charlie looked in, he slipped, and to my horror, he fell into the drain.

I ran across the road and put my arm down into the drain to see if I could even touch him, and I couldn't. It was that kind of narrow yet very deep drain that ran below the sidewalk with a very heavy manhole cover on top of the sidewalk. There is a hole in the cover, so I lay on my stomach, and I looked to see if I could see him. A precious little boy. He was perched on a narrow ledge about five feet below, wet, dirty, and whimpering. Honestly, I broke my nails trying to lift the manhole cover, but it was far too heavy.

So I ran to one of my neighbor's homes, and I asked the husband who answered the door if he could please help me. Well, he got a crowbar from his garage, and he and his teenage son followed me to where Charlie was stuck. When they got the manhole cover off, I could see my precious little dog shivering in the cold. I knew if he slipped off that wet ledge, he would be lost forever.

Well, the dad came up with a plan, and his son agreed. He said he would hold his son's legs and lower him down into the drain. His son was a tall and skinny boy. I'll never forget that moment. "Okay," I said with tears flowing down my cheeks. "When you reach him, grab hold of him and don't let go. It doesn't matter where you grab him, just hold on. Even if he barks or wriggles or bites you, just don't let go!"

Well, he laid flat on the sidewalk, and his dad lowered him into the drain holding tightly to his ankles. I heard Charlie yelp as he reached him. And then the boy called on his dad to pull him up. When he appeared holding my scared little mucky pup, I threw my arms around both of them. I thanked the dad and the son from the bottom of my heart and made a mental note to get this boy a gift. Honestly, in that moment, I would have given him a kidney.

I held Charlie all the way home. When we got inside the front door, I lay on the floor, and I just sobbed. Charlie licked me over and over. Apparently, none the worse for wear after his big adventure, although seriously in need of a bath, but I was still shaking with fear.

Have you ever been in a place like that? A place where you're literally shaking with fear? Your heart is thumping in your chest. You can't think clearly. There is a ringing in your ears, and you can barely move. There are lots of situations that take us there. Let me think of just a few. You're being wheeled into surgery with no guarantee of a positive outcome. Or if you've signed divorce papers that you never wanted to sign. As you walk into a courtroom to hear a sentence passed on your son on drug charges. When you're three months behind on your mortgage, and you're afraid you'll be evicted. Or when you try to

go to sleep but you have no idea where your child is that night or for many, many, many nights before. Or perhaps you're in a place like Charlie was where if somebody doesn't grab hold of you now and not let go, you just feel like you're not going to make it.

Fear is one of the most intensely felt emotions we experience as humans. It can cause us to run for our lives or literally paralyze us, freezing us to the spot. 2020 is in our rearview mirror now, but it wreaked so much havoc in our lives, in the life of our nation, and around the world. Fear is often motivated by what we can't control. Although we probably all agree at this point in our lives that we get it now, we're really never in control. But there are still times when that becomes crystal clear, and the situation we're facing is so unpredictable and so devastating that we are gripped by fear.

My daily habit of reading three or four Psalms every morning has caused me to dive deeper into the Psalms, and some of them I've rarely read. I have my go-to Psalms, and you probably do too. They are those that we know will bring us comfort or strength. But being disciplined to read through all the Psalms once a month has unpacked some jewels I definitely would have missed; Psalm 55 is one of those. Let's read part of it together, and then we'll look at what was happening in David's life when he wrote it.

Open your ears, God, to my prayer; don't pretend you don't hear me knocking. Come close and whisper your answer. I really need you. I shudder at the mean voice, quail before the evil eye, as they pile on the guilt, stockpile angry slander. My insides are turned inside out; specters of death have me down. I shake with fear; I shudder from head to foot. "Who will give me wings," I ask -- "wings like a dove?" Get me out of here on dove wings; I want some peace and quiet. I want a walk in the country. I want a cabin in the woods. I'm desperate for change from rage and stormy weather.

Wow! I shake with fear? I shudder from head to foot? These are strong, desperate words from the king of Israel. John Phillips is a preeminent scholar on the Psalms and says that there is little doubt that this psalm was written during the time David's son Absalom rebelled against his father and was determined to claim Israel's throne.

Now David wasn't a young king here. He's in his 60s, and he's seen a lot of life, a lot of wins, and a lot of losses. Absalom's support in Jerusalem was rising, and David was afraid of his own son. Can you imagine? What a stab in the heart that had to be. I can't wrap my head around what that would feel like to know that a child you love, a child you picked up when they fell down, a child you've read to and prayed with at night, now wishes you were dead.

For most of his life, David was an excellent commander of the army, but he was not a good father. He had caused a lot of division among his children, and now his beloved son Absalom was out to destroy him. One of the greatest challenges to our faith, even to those of us, unlike David, who lived beyond the death and resurrection of Christ, is that the waves of our past mistakes or wrong choices often wash up in the shore of our souls when things go wrong.

We wonder, did I cause this to happen? What would have happened if I'd stayed in my marriage? Would this have happened if I'd never had that abortion? Am I being punished now for that stupid affair? Am I facing bankruptcy because I wasn't faithful in my giving? Did I try to force my faith on my children, and now they want nothing to do with it? When we believe that our actions have caused devastation not only to us but also to others we love, then that kind of fear is an overwhelming, sickening feeling in the pit of our stomachs.

But let's go back to David and see what we can learn from this greatest of all kings of Israel who made many mistakes, and yet remember this? We read: *But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man after whom God said, "I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart."* I often think that's a fascinating description of a man who messed up so badly. Clearly, what God saw in David was a fallible human being, but one who loved him passionately. That's what God looks for in you and me. Yes, we will make mistakes. We'll fall down but do we love him? Jesus covered our sin, and God wants our hearts.

The fact that it was his own son coming after David was a far more sickening fear to bear than any other battle he'd faced before. David was an accomplished man of battle. In fact, that's why David wasn't allowed to build the temple but passed that privilege on to his son, Solomon. David had too much blood on his hands.

Well, John Phillips suggests that there appears to be a break in this writing of the Psalm. In the first eight verses, David is crying out in pain and despair. This is how this section we looked at earlier ends before David remembers who God is. *Get me out of here on dove wings. I want some peace and quiet. I want a walk in the country. I want a cabin in the woods. I'm desperate for change from rage and stormy weather.*

Gosh! Have you ever wanted to do that? Just get out of town. Go somewhere quiet. A cabin in the woods with no cellphone service sounds amazing. Yep, I know I have. Can you feel David's weariness, his desperation in his words? He is at the end of himself. He's exhausted. He's heartsick and broken. He had been quickly taken out of the city for his safety by his commander and chief, Joab. Everything else was left behind. And now David is being run out of town.

Now what makes this devastating situation even more painful is the person by Absalom's side, David's best friend, Ahithophel. There is nothing worse when you're in a terrible situation, where you feel as if you are fighting for your life, and you discover that the person who stabbed you in the back is one of your best friends.

We read: *It is not my foe who so arrogantly insult me -- I could have hidden for them. Instead, it is you -- my equal, my companion and close friend. What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.*

Not only was Ahithophel one of David's closest friends, they'd worshipped together. That kind of feels like the ultimate betrayal, and it broke David's heart. David walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His best friend and his favorite son are

out to have him killed. Unimaginable!

So here's what I want us to look at. What turned things around for David? When he was literally holding on by a thread, overwhelmed by fear and grief, what changed things for him? It seems as if in the quiet of where they rested, David remembered God's promise and wrote the rest of Psalm 55. The tone of the Psalm changes. He moves from despair to hope. He knew that he had been anointed by God as king of Israel, and no matter how things looked -- and they did not look good -- God always keeps his promise.

Here's what he continued with: *But I will call on God, and the Lord will rescue me.*

David stopped looking around and started looking up. Now I know that sounds simplistic and the right thing to say, but honestly, it is a life-saving truth. Remembering who God is, remembering his promises changed everything for David, and it will work for you and me as well. It was as if David was precariously balanced on a ledge five feet below ground, just like Charlie, and God reached down and grabbed hold of him. And now he speaks to you and to me: *Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.*

What a promise! David makes this declaration before the battle even begins. He knows things are bad, but he keeps his eyes fixed on God. I don't know what's going on in your life right now as we read that passage, but I want to remind you that God keeps his promises. There are situations where we feel betrayed and wounded, and the great temptation is to try and fix things by ourselves. We get to choose. We can trust our own ability to untangle a mess, to fight our own battles, or we can hide in the shadow of the Almighty. We can take our fear to our Father.

Well, David lived to see God's deliverance. Absalom and Ahithophel lost their lives, and King David was restored to his rightful throne. David made it clear to all the people of Israel that God was the one who had saved him. This is what he writes: *"He reached down from heaven and rescued me; he drew me out of deep waters. He rescued me from*

my powerful enemies, from those who hated me and were too strong for me. They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress, but the Lord supported me. He led me to a place of safety; he rescued me because He delights in me."

Don't you love that? He rescued me because he delights in me. David wasn't rescued because he did everything right in life. No! He was rescued because God loved him. And I think that's the message that I want you to take into your heart today. God delights in you. So often, we think, we've had a good day where we've done everything that the Lord would want, and there are other days where we feel we've blown it. And sometimes we think on the days we feel that we got it all right that God loves us more? And the days when we mess up that God loves us less. That is a lie from the pit of hell. That's just not true. God loves you right now.

And I have some letters from some of you who watch our program here from prison. I just think that's amazing that the Holy Spirit, there are no walls, there are no bars that can keep him out. You and I can sit here today as brothers and sisters in Christ. You know the ground below Calvary is level. There is no place for people who think they've done better to take a step up. We've all messed up. But as I say in this book, God is the god of the messer-upper. Think how it would change your life if you finally were able to embrace the truth that God knows all about you. That God sees you, and he loves you, and he delights in you not because you got everything right but because of who he is.

I really want to get a copy of this book, *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*: "Clinging to hope when life is falling apart" to you so that you can study it for yourself. But I would love to ask you to come on a little trip with me. We have the privilege of working in Southeast Asia and many parts around the world where young girls are literally holding on by a thread, trafficked into the worst kind of nightmare. We're not talking about adults; we're talking about little vulnerable girls who wonder, can anybody hear my cry? I want you to watch this with me, and I'll tell you how you and I can get to make a difference for every single one of them. Watch this.

On the mission field:

SHEILA: How do you hold on when you want to let go? When you're at your darkest point? What keeps you moving to the light? I've met some young girls that are living in the dark. They're surrounded by evil, and the light must seem so dim to them.

You see, these girls are victims of human trafficking. Their lives have been turned upside down by cruel, ruthless, money-hungry individuals who see these girls and boys as nothing but a commodity to be traded and sold.

Most of these victims were tricked, lied to, or even kidnapped into brothels around the world, and now they're being held captive by chains, violent threats, and emotional abuse. So what keeps these girls and boys holding on? What is the dim light in their darkness? It's hope. A hope that this torment will end someday. A hope that they can return to their families. A hope that they can get a safe, productive job to support themselves. A hope that God has a plan for their life.

I can't imagine having to hold on to such a dim possibility of hope, but we can help provide a bright hope that will light up their darkness. We can help save these girls and boys. We can rescue them out of their darkness and start the healing process so that they can see God's bright plan for their lives.

But we have to do it now. They're waiting. Don't let their hope die.

End of video**In the studio:**

SHEILA: I know without a shadow of a doubt, if you could get on that plane with me and fly there and meet some of these young girls, you would literally empty your wallet because you wanted to make a difference. Because sometimes you watch something on

television, and it seems like -- it's almost like you're watching a movie or watching something that's not real. But when you're actually on the ground there, and you sit with these precious young girls, and so many of them want us to pray for them. Even though they know that we're getting back on a plane and going on back to another life, they're like, "Would you pray with me?" We've had the privilege of praying with so many of these young girls who want to give their life to Christ.

But I want us to be able to reach into that dark, dark place and grab hold, just as I grabbed hold of my dog Charlie and pulled him out because if he slipped, we were going to lose him. So many of these young girls are literally perched on a ledge, thinking, is there anybody who could reach in and grab hold of me because I'm not sure how much longer I can stand?

But here's the amazing thing. I've seen the difference that we can make. Here at *LIFE*, and this is our last week of Rescue LIFE, we have this amazingly comprehensive system of reach, rescue, and restore. Reach: Where we go into the villages and teach and educate these young girls how to look out for predators, the kind of lies they'll be told, and how to resist it. And then rescue: Where we literally go in and kick down the doors of these brothels and rescue these precious little ones. And then restore: Where we bring them to a place where they can learn that they are not a number to God. That they have a name, that they have a future, that they have a purpose.

We have some amazing friends at the moment who have put up a matching gift of \$320,000. It would usually take \$128 to be able to start that process of reaching, rescuing, and restoring a girl, but because of the matching gift, if you're able today to give \$64, that will be matched, and one girl will be snatched off that ledge into freedom. So if you're able to do \$128, then two girls will be able to be rescued; \$1280 to actually rescue 20 girls. I know that's a lot, but perhaps, in your budget, you have some way of letting go of something else and thinking, while this matching gift is here, we've got to do this.

Now for any gift at all, we'd be honored to send a copy of my book. I want God to rescue

you when you feel you're hanging by a thread. But let's join together and rescue these young precious girls. I've seen what it's like when they're brought to a place of safety. So please, will you call now? Just make the best gift you can! But please do it now. Let's snatch them off of that ledge in Jesus' name.

Begin video clip:

ANNOUNCER: Innocent children and young people, longing to be loved and cared for, are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.

Through Mission: Rescue *LIFE*, you can reach out to educate children at risk of being trafficked, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives giving them a future.

With a generous \$320,000 matching gift, now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you Sheila Walsh's brand-new book, *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*; "A lifeline of hope for those who feel their life is falling apart."

With your gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive the *Beauty Out of Ashes* puzzle set featuring an image taken by our team while on a trip to the mission field. This 500-piece puzzle forms a beautiful portrait of hope in the midst of despair. Included is a 24-piece puzzle for your children and grandchildren.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280, which will now help rescue 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Divine Servant." This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

On the mission field:

RANDY: What you're seeing behind me right now is some villagers who are learning how to not be lured into sex trafficking. We know for a fact that some girls have disappeared from this area and have not been heard of again. So it is critical that we reach into areas like this and educate them so that they will know what to look for so when sex traffickers come back to this area, no more will be taken.

We are doing all that we can to reach into places like this, to rescue the girls that have been taken and to restore their lives and restore their families and restore their villages. I hope you will go to the phone right now, go online, do what you can. The Rescue LIFE program is making a huge impact in areas that really need the love of God. Do what you can. Thank you so much!

End of video**In the studio:**

SHEILA: Thank you so much. And remember, for any gift at all, please ask for your copy of *Holding on When You Want to Let Go*. But this is our last week. I love all our missions, but I have to tell you, I feel passionate about this one. If you saw some of these girls, they could be your daughter, they could be your sister -- they're just precious lives! Every one made in the image of God. So if you haven't called yet, would you please call?

We're so grateful for the people who have put up this matching gift. They've helped us in many campaigns. So if you're able to do \$64, now it will be matched, and a girl will be rescued. \$128 will be matched; two girls brought from darkness into light. What a privilege we have to be able to do this in Jesus' name.

So thank you. Keep calling. Keep calling! It's our last week. So for all of us here at *LIFE*, I'm Sheila Walsh. I'll see you next time.